

Pastoral Care: The Essentials

**with Rev Jackie Stoneman
Ministry Conference 2012**

Some Biblical Reflections

1. Love One Another – John 13:34-35

“I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. 35 By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”

- Love as Jesus loved
- ‘One Another passages’ – much more than casseroles
- Impact on evangelism

2. The Ultimate aim is the maturity of the Church – Ephesians 4:11-16

“The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, 12 to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, 13 until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ. 14 We must no longer be children, tossed to and fro and blown about by every wind of doctrine, by people’s trickery, by their craftiness in deceitful scheming. 15 But speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, 16 from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body’s growth in building itself up in love.

Whole body of Christ equipped for the work of ministry – includes pastoral responsibility

- Building up the body (numerically and maturity) until – unity and maturity – Christ likeness
- Corporate focus but must include individual reality
- Each part ‘working properly’ results in growth based on love.

3. We are to care from God’s care! – 2 Corinthians 1:3-5

“3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, 4 who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God. 5 For just as we share abundantly in the sufferings of Christ, so also our comfort abounds through Christ.”

Some Quotes:

“We shouldn’t try to care by ourselves. Care is not an endurance test. We should, whenever possible, care together with others. It is the community of care that reminds the person being cared for of his or her belovedness ... Together we can create a caring space that is good, not only for those who receive care, but also for

those who give it. In this space, the boundaries between receiving and giving vanish, and true community can start to exist.”

Henri Nouwen, Our Greatest Gift: A Meditation on Dying and Caring, Harper Collins, New York, 1994, pp. 63, 65.

“The community of God’s people was created in the heart of God so that no one in pain should be alone. There is more to healing than the alleviation of symptoms. The reason for the very existence of the church is that it should be a fountain of life and healing, and a place of support in times of crisis and need.”

Eric Gaudion – Braving the Storm

We ‘bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ’

(Galatians 6:2) – though we bear with and not for since ‘each one will have to bear his own load.’ (Galatians 6:5)

“It is a process whereby we:

- **listen with gentleness and patience,**
- **speak with truth and love,**
- **hold out a hand in time of loneliness and fear,**
- **sit in silence through the long night watches, and**
- **rejoice when the shadow of distress is dissolved in the warm sun of deliverance.”**

William B Oglesby Jr Biblical Themes for Pastoral Care Parthenon Press Nashville 1980.

The Qualities of a good carer/listener

☐ **The ability to listen without interrupting**

“Being heard is so close to being loved that for the average person, they are almost indistinguishable.” David Augsburger

“We live in an age when the art and ministry of listening is dwindling. Husbands don’t listen to their wives. Parents don’t listen to their children. That’s why so many, despairing of adults around them confide their deepest secrets to their pets or dolls. Everything conspires to make us bad listeners.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, in “Life Together”, a book on the basics of Christian living, says that “the first service that one owes to others in the fellowship, consists in *listening to them*. Many are looking for an ear to listen. They don’t find it easily because Christians are talking when they should be listening, but he who can no longer be listening to his brother (or sister) will soon no longer be listening to God either!” Strong words.” Arch Hart

☐ Compassion/empathy

The ability to understand another person's circumstances, point of view, thoughts, and feelings. When experiencing empathy, you are able to understand someone else's internal experiences.

☐ Other-centredness

☐ Warm heart but clear head

☐ An ability to trust everything to God

☐ An ability to sit with helplessness (these 2 are linked)

☐ The ability to resist the urge to fix everything

☐ Acceptance, not being judgmental

☐ Attentiveness to what is being said

☐ Sensitivity to the emotions being expressed, and

☐ Ability to reflect back to the other party the substance and feelings being expressed.

☐ 'You cannot exhort an unencouraged person!' "A hurting heart has no ears"

☐ Selwyn Hughes speaks about 3 levels of caring:

- Level of encouragement (feelings)
- Level of exhortation (behaviour)
- Level of enlightenment (thinking/beliefs)

Unhelpful Responses

× Advising: 'If I were you I'd"

× Arguing logically: 'There are many reasons to consider, let's work through them.'

'If you look at the facts you can see that you can't do it now.'

× Judging: 'You made a real mess of it, didn't you?'

× Name calling: 'You welfare, widows, young mums, are all alike.'

× Diagnosing: 'You're just saying that. What you really mean is'

× Reassuring: 'You'll be all right.' 'It will be OK, you'll see.'

× Interrogating: 'Why did you keep doing it?'

× Telling your story:

× Using clichés: 'Every cloud has a silver lining'

× Try not to say:

- 'Time heals it all.'

- 'It's OK.'

- 'I know just how you feel.'

- 'You're young/can get married again/have another baby.'

- 'It must have been God's will.'

- 'You have to think of the children.'

- 'At least you have your faith.'

(In fact, any sentence that begins with 'At least ...' will sound as though you are minimising and possibly trivialising their pain.)

☐ Ask questions, but remember that questions are not the only way to find out what's going on.

Open and closed questions

Avoiding the barrage

☐ "Sounds like" ... "I imagine" ...

☐ Becoming comfortable with silences

☐ Resisting the urge to 'fix' things

☐ Listen with an understanding that: "all persons are responsible for their own unique inner world... pastoral listening is an ability to listen with care and with an

educated ear so that the speaker can be assisted to take personal responsibility for the problem exposed.” *Frances M Moran – Listening, a Pastoral Style*
David Lovell Publishing Melbourne 2001

☐ Confidentiality

☐ Prayer

☐ Reading The Bible

The Bridge (By Edwin Friedman)

Reprinted from Edwin H. Friedman's *Friedman's Fables* . Copyright (C) 1990 by Guilford Publications, Inc., 72 Spring Street, New York, NY 10012.

There was a man who had given much thought to what he wanted from life. He had experienced many moods and trials. He had experimented with different ways of living, and he had had his share of both success and failure. At last, he began to see clearly where he wanted to go. Diligently, he searched for the right opportunity. Sometimes he came close, only to be pushed away. Often he applied all his strength and imagination, only to find the path hopelessly blocked.

And then at last it came. But the opportunity would not wait. It would be made available only for a short time. If it were seen that he was not committed, the opportunity would not come again. Eager to arrive, he started on his journey. With each step, he wanted to move faster; with each thought about his goal, his heart beat quicker; with each vision of what lay ahead, he found renewed vigor. Strength that had left him since his early youth returned, and desires, all kinds of desires, reawakened from their long-dormant positions.

Hurrying along, he came upon a bridge that crossed through the middle of a town. It had been built high above a river in order to protect it from the floods of spring. He started across. Then he noticed someone coming from the opposite direction. As they moved closer, it seemed as though the other were coming to greet him. He could see clearly, however, that he did not know this other, who was dressed similarly except for something tied around his waist.

When they were within hailing distance, he could see that what the other had about his waist was a rope. It was wrapped around him many times and probably, if extended, would reach a length of 30 feet. The other began to uncurl the rope, and, just as they were coming close, the stranger said, “Pardon me, would you be so kind as to hold the end a moment?” Surprised by this politely phrased but curious

request, he agreed without a thought, reached out, and took it. "Thank you," said the other, who then added, "two hands now, and remember, hold tight." Whereupon, the other jumped off the bridge.

Quickly, the free-falling body hurtled the distance of the rope's length, and from the bridge the man abruptly felt the pull. Instinctively, he held tight and was almost dragged over the side. He managed to brace himself against the edge, however, and after having caught his breath, looked down at the other dangling, close to oblivion. "What are you trying to do?" he yelled. "Just hold tight," said the other. "This is ridiculous," the man thought and began trying to haul the other in. He could not get the leverage, however. It was as though the weight of the other person and the length of the rope had been carefully calculated in advance so that together they created a counterweight just beyond his strength to bring the other back to safety. "Why did you do this?" the man called out. "Remember," said the other, "if you let go, I will be lost." "But I cannot pull you up," the man cried. "I am your responsibility," said the other. "Well, I did not ask for it," the man said. "If you let go, I am lost," repeated the other.

He began to look around for help. But there was no one. How long would he have to wait? Why did this happen to befall him now, just as he was on the verge of true success? He examined the side, searching for a place to tie the rope. Some protrusion, perhaps, or maybe a hole in the boards. But the railing was unusually uniform in shape; there were no spaces between the boards. There was no way to get rid of this newfound burden, even temporarily.

"What do you want?" he asked the other hanging below. "Just your help," the other answered. "How can I help? I cannot pull you in, and there is no place to tie the rope so that I can go and find someone to help me help you." "I know that. Just hang on; that will be enough. Tie the rope around your waist; it will be easier." Fearing that his arms could not hold out much longer, he tied the rope around his waist.

"Why did you do this?" he asked again. "Don't you see what you have done? What possible purpose could you have had in mind?" "Just remember," said the other, "my life is in your hands." What should he do? "If I let go, all my life I will know that I let this other die. If I stay, I risk losing my momentum toward my own long-sought-after salvation. Either way this will haunt me forever." With ironic humor he thought to die himself, instantly, to jump off the bridge while still holding on. "That would teach this fool." But he wanted to live and to live life fully. "What a choice I have to make; how shall I ever decide?" As time went by, still no one came. The critical moment of decision was drawing near. To show his commitment to his own goals, he would have to continue on his journey now. It was already almost too late to arrive in time. But what a terrible choice to have to make.

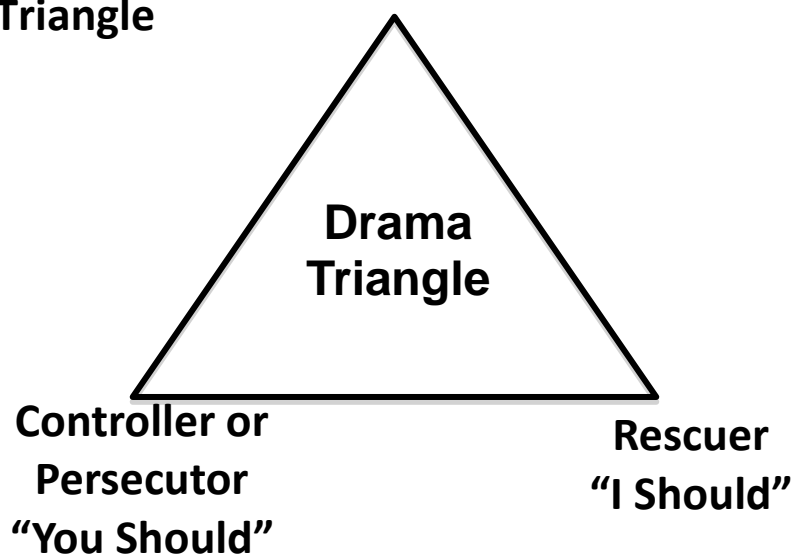
A new thought occurred to him. While he could not pull this other up solely by his own efforts, if the other would shorten the rope from his end by curling it around his waist again and again, together they could do it. Actually, the other could do it by himself, so long as he, standing on the bridge, kept it still and steady.

“Now listen,” he shouted down. “I think I know how to save you.” And he explained his plan. But the other wasn’t interested. “You mean you won’t help? But I told you I cannot pull you up myself, and I don’t think I can hang on much longer either.” “You must try,” the other shouted back in tears. “If you fail, I die.” The point of decision arrived. What should he do? “My life or this other’s?” And then a new idea. A revelation! So new, in fact, it seemed heretical, so alien was it to his traditional way of thinking.

“I want you to listen carefully,” he said, “because I mean what I am about to say. I will not accept the position of choice for your life, only for my own; the position of choice for your own life I hereby give back to you.” “What do you mean?” the other asked, afraid. “I mean, simply, it’s up to you. You decide which way this ends. I will become the counterweight. You do the pulling and bring yourself up. I will even tug a little from here.” He began unwinding the rope from around his waist and braced himself anew against the side. “You cannot mean what you say,” the other shrieked. “You would not be so selfish. I am your responsibility. What could be so important that you would let someone die? Do not do this to me.”

He waited a moment. There was no change in the tension of the rope. “I accept your choice,” he said, at last, and freed his hands.

The Drama Triangle



Who is Caring for and Encouraging You?